

Promising Practices



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Innovative practices & initiatives from around Ontario

Kwae Kii Win Centre: Alcohol Management Program

In 2010, in response to concerns about public intoxication in Thunder Bay, Shelter House www.shelterhouse.on.ca began looking to establish an alcohol management program for people with severe and chronic alcohol use problems.

Existing services in the community such as the [Salvation Army Booth Centre](#) and the [Balmoral Centre](#), a detox facility, were not appropriate long-term solutions for the homeless and those who use alcohol chronically. The former Executive Director of Shelter House, however, felt that the program offered at [Seaton House Annex](#) in Toronto could be replicated in Thunder Bay.

In early 2011 efforts to establish an alcohol management program began. The initiative received support from Thunder Bay's Chief of Police who indicated that policing costs were rising, in part due to the number of calls law enforcement officers were responding to.

Development of the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy was well under way when the alcohol management program was proposed and the Drug Strategy committee officially endorsed the



Patty Hajdu

program when the committee released the [Traveling the Road to Change Community Report May 2012](#).

Kwae Kii Win Centre opened its doors in March 2012 to 15 clients. The harm reduction approach provides clients with dosed servings of alcohol to prevent withdrawal and create housing stability. Through the program, clients gain access to

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primary care and community supports that aim to improve their overall physical and mental health.

An evaluation of the program was considered in the original budget but capacity to conduct the evaluation was stretched. In fall 2012, however, the Executive Director, Patty Hajdu, was contacted by Bernadette Pauley, an Associate Professor in the School of Nursing, at the University of Victoria. Pauley invited the Kwae Kii Win Centre to participate in a national research study of four other alcohol management programs. The study is pending approval for funding through the [Canadian Institute for Health Research](#). Ms. Hajdu has agreed to be a co-investigator in the evaluation.

In the meantime, Kwae Kii Win Centre will be pilot-testing the evaluation tools developed by the [Centre for Addictions Research in British Columbia](#). Data gathering is currently underway, and study and control participants have been recruited.

The most recent admissions to the program will be followed and compared with similar people who are not residents of the program. Outcome measures will include client perception of quality of life. They will also look at general health:

- Liver function and blood sugar levels;



The Kwae Kii Win Centre

- Alcohol usage;
- Frequency of encounters with police; and
- Emergency room visits.

An on-site research assistant is gathering bi-weekly data. A report will be available in December 2013.

The need for the services provided by the Managed Alcohol Program has led the Shelter House Executive Director to approach Thunder Bay City Council to allow the agency to purchase a building adjacent to the current site in order to expand from 15 to 20 beds.

“We know that there are about 30 to 40 individuals in the community that meet program admission criteria” says Hajdu. “Having appropriate support for chronically addicted

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people provides a less costly alternative to a jail cell or the hospital emergency department, while simultaneously improving the quality of life.”

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